

10.1 percent of households in Wisconsin faced food insecurity from 2006-08.

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) commented on the numbers released by the United States Department of Agriculture today tracking the food security of American households for 2008. Food security refers to a household's consistent ability to access enough food for active, healthy lives for all household members at all times during the year. The USDA study found that in 2008, 14.6 percent (17 million) households were food insecure, which means that eating patterns of a family were altered or disrupted because of insufficient resources for food.

The prevalence of food insecurity in 2008 was up from 11.1 percent (13 million households) in 2007, an increase of 4 million households, and was the highest observed since nationally representative food security surveys were initiated in 1995.

About one-third of food-insecure households (6.7 million households, or 5.7 percent), had very low food security, up from 4.7 million households (4.1 percent) in 2007, and the highest level observed since food security surveys were initiated in 1995.

Households with very low food security are those in which the food intake of some household members was reduced, and their normal eating patterns were disrupted because of the household's food insecurity. Typically, households classified as having very low food security experienced the condition in 7 or 8 months of the year, for a few days in each of those months.

"I know what it's like to be food insecure," Congresswoman Moore said. "I remember being in high school, being hungry and not having any money to buy my lunch.

"With that personal experience, I know the importance of making sure people – especially children – do not go to bed hungry and wake up with their stomachs still empty. Growing boys and girls need to be eating nutritious meals. Children who eat three healthy meals a day are so much more successful in the classroom. We need our students learning reading, writing, math and science – not distracted because they are not getting enough to eat. Good nutrition for our students is critical if we are to have an education system that works.

“That is why I have been an ardent supporter of legislation that would increase access to healthy meals for kids, introducing a bill in July (the AFTERSchool Meals Act) that would give all schools the authorization to provide suppers through either the school meals program or the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

“Also in July, I reintroduced the Student Breakfast and Education Improvement Act with Sens. Kohl and Feingold. The bill would provide grants, awarded on a competitive basis, to schools with the neediest students – those with at least 65 percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.”

Studies suggest that school breakfast programs can have a tremendous impact on student academic performance, and enhance the classroom environment by reducing tardiness and improving student attentiveness.

In recent years, Milwaukee Public Schools, in partnership with the Milwaukee Hunger Task Force, have launched pilot programs to provide universal free breakfast to students in more than 60 participating district schools.

According to the USDA study, about 10.1 percent of households in Wisconsin were “food insecure,” and 3.7 percent faced very low food security from 2006-08.

Rates of food insecurity were substantially higher than the national average for households with incomes near or below the federal poverty line, households with children headed by single women or single men, and Black and Hispanic households.

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For an interview with Congresswoman Gwen Moore, please contact Marni Goldberg at 202-593-8574.

